

Sent: Wednesday, November 16, 2022 2:54 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Isaiah 10

"Ah Lord God! It is You who have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for You! (Jeremiah 32:17)

Remember last week's lesson (from Isaiah 9), where Isaiah prophesied how "people who walk in darkness would (one day!) see a great light"? Referring to people from the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, two of the ten territories in the northern kingdom of Israel which were "condemned" and therefore would be the first area to be attacked by the Assyrian army, as part of God's judgment on Israel for its rejection of the God of Israel! With many of its people experiencing "gloom and anguish and driven away into darkness"! And, would you believe, the very area--known as Galilee--where, seven hundred or so years later, Jesus would grow up and begin His earthly ministry, calling His disciples and performing many miracles by the Sea of Galilee, and in Capernaum, and bringing hope for Israel and "light" to the world!

Interestingly, Jesus would refer back to this very prophecy! Matthew 4:12-16 says, "Now when Jesus heard that John (the Baptist) had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea (the Sea of Galilee), in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali! (Yea!) This was to fulfill what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles--the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned!' (And verse 17 says that "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!")

And we also saw how Isaiah would elaborate further on his earlier prophesy (in Isaiah 7:14) about "the virgin who would be with child and bear a son and call his name 'Immanuel'"! In Isaiah 9:6-7 he adds more about this "son who will be given"! How "the government would be on His shoulders, and His name would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace..." And how "the increase of his government and of peace would have no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom...from that time forth and forevermore!"

But, as we now know, it would take a long time before the first part of Isaiah's prophecy would be fulfilled (with the second part still to come)! Galatians 4:4 says that "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"! (Franz Delitzsch, in his commentary on Isaiah, writes that "the great light would not arise til the darkness had reached its deepest point, and that there would be a gradual increase in the darkness of Israel until that time would come!")

And so, our lesson last week ended with Israel still living in "darkness" and God's anger toward them "not turned away"!

And that's basically the way our lesson in Isaiah 10 picks up last night!

Verses 1-4 begins with another "woe"--this time to Israel's leaders who would use their position to "enact evil statutes... and record unjust decisions and deprive the needy of justice"! Constable says, "perverting the justice that was in place in the Mosaic legal system"! And Isaiah would pose grim questions for them to consider: "What will you do in the day of reckoning, and in the devastation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your wealth?"

And for the fourth time, Isaiah notes that "for all this, God's anger does not turn away, and His hand is still stretched out"! (A declaration which was first cited in 5:25, after the parable of the vineyard, and the six "woes"--and Isaiah's accusation that "they (Israel) have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel!" Then the prophecy, in verse 26, that He would "lift up a standard to the distant nation, and whistle for it from the ends of the earth; and behold it will come with speed swiftly!")

Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear dull that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear!"

With Isaiah 10:5, another "woe"! But this time directed to Assyria! Who would become "the rod of God's anger" and the "staff of His indignation"! Against "a godless nation" and "the people of His fury"! And that would be Israel! Wow! (When you think of God's "rod and staff," you probably think the same thing that comes to my mind--Psalm 23:4 and how "His rod and His staff, they comfort me"! But not here!)

Assyria is undoubtedly not aware that God is sovereign or that He is using them for His purpose! As Wiersbe notes, there's "a disparity between Assyria's motives and the Lord's purpose"! While God's purpose is to "discipline" His people, the Assyrians were out to "destroy" them!

Assyria's on a roll--"cutting off many nations" and "kingdom of idols"--believing that she can and will do to "Jerusalem and her images" (note the putdown!) just like she's done to "Samaria and her idols"! With its king (Sennacherib) mistakenly thinking he's the one who's sovereign! Using the "power of his hand," and (in verses 13-14) bragging about his abilities, and achievements, and irresistible power! Big mistake!

Isaiah 10:12 sets the record straight! "So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness!'"

Motyer notes God's sovereignty in all of this! "The Assyrian holocaust was not 'let loose' on the world; it was sent, directed where it was merited (against a godless nation), kept within heaven's limit, and in the end punished for its excesses!"

Is it even logical for the impersonal instrument of God's judgment to exalt itself over the Person who wields it (the God of hosts)?

In verses 16-19, Isaiah prophesies how the Lord, the God of hosts, would finish using Assyria as God's instrument ("rod and staff") by "sending a wasting disease among its stout warriors...and it will be as when a sick man wastes away...and what's left will be a small number"! Like a "remnant"? (We'll learn more of this in upcoming lessons!)

But, in verses 24-34 Isaiah gives us more details! (Isaiah, in his writing style, has a way of going back and forth!)

Isaiah begins his summary of the closing events with an assuring message from the Lord God of hosts: "O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with a rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did! (Remember?) For in a very little while My indignation against you will be spent and My anger will be directed to their (Assyria's) destruction"! Whew! Remember Midian? And what God did in Egypt?

Then Isaiah foresees the Assyrian army descending on Jerusalem from the north passing through and conquering one city after another and yet, verse 32 says, the Lord, the God of hosts, would bring it all to "a halt" at a place called "Nob" (a mile or so from Jerusalem)--and "lop off the boughs...and bring down the lofty...and cut down the thickets of the forest, and Lebanon (speaking of Assyria) will fall by the Mighty One! Yea! (Motyer writes that the "triumphalist march from conquest to conquest is framed with beautiful irony by statements of its ultimate ineffectuality, with the lifting of the yoke and the felling of the tree"!)

Ah Lord God! Nothing is too hard for You!

Hebrews gives some appropriate closing thoughts!

"It's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" (Hebrews 10:31)

"Take care brethren, that there not be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day by day, as long as it is still called 'today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin!" (Hebrews 3:12-13)

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God!

Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

Lowell